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FULL TEXT

~~DM~~

MAN: I'm ~~John~~ Braiden. The Central Intelligence Agency is under fire again. This time, accused of engaging in the heroin traffic.

We Americans love mythology, and where CIA is concerned, we swallow almost anything. For example, large numbers of Americans still believe that CIA encompassed the death of John Kennedy. The accusation used to make Robert Kennedy almost physically ill. But he was never able to scratch it, and you can still hear it whispered by those whose minds run to things that go whoosh in the night.

But unlike the death of Kennedy myth, the heroin myth has found respectable support. In a new book, THE POLITICS OF HEROIN IN SOUTHEAST ASIA, a young Yale student and anti-war activist named Alfred W. McCoy, suggests that the heroin tragedy in this nation is the fault of CIA. American secret agents have been involved in the narcotics traffic at three levels, McCoy says. One, allying with groups actively engaged in the traffic. Two, covering up for known traffickers. Three, active engagement themselves.

If I may adopt to Mr. McCoy's style for a moment, I'd like to comment as follows. Some Americans who want to change the policy in Vietnam endanger their effort on three levels. One, they attribute evil to those who carry out the policy. Two, as evidence of the evil, they offer the policy. Three, they thus contribute to the making of a dangerous myth.

To say, as Mr. McCoy does, that CIA's armies forced the farmers to move and that they then grew opium, is evidence that CIA is engaged in war. But that's all it is. It is not evidence of complicity in heroin traffic. Opium has always been a product of Southeast Asia. The presence of an American army makes it a more valuable product, therefore, it is likely that CIA, like

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the army itself, has from time to time gained information from or given support to drug traffickers. It is also likely that individuals employed by CIA, have been guilty of transporting heroin. Just as soldiers in the US army have been guilty. Should we therefore conclude that the US army is actively engaged in the drug traffic?

But portraying this will probably not stop the myth makers. Try citing the Warren Commission to the man who tells you about Kennedy and the CIA. Oh, he will smile knowingly, the Warren Commission? That's the CIA cover-up.

This is Tom Braiden for Spectrum.

NEWSMAN: Nine personal points of view on Spectrum. Opinions not necessarily those of this station or the CBS Radio Network.